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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0328
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 3885
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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 7843
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002692

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Major media (lead stories in Ha'aretz and Makor Rishon-Hatzofe) reported that on Wednesday Defense Minister Ehud Barak told his senior staff and the heads of the military industries that it was very likely that the IDF was moving closer to an extensive ground

action in the Gaza Strip, "in order to halt the rocket fire and the strengthening [of militant organizations]." Israel Radio cited denial by senior political sources associated with PM Ehud Olmert that the Security cabinet made such a decision. Barak's statement came a few hours after the security cabinet decided not to significantly alter the IDF's actions in the Gaza Strip. The cabinet also decided to examine the legal implications of imposing sanctions on the civilian population, such as disrupting the supply of electricity. Ha'aretz reported that no troop buildup or other preparations are being made in the Southern Command for immediate action. Ha'aretz reported that senior Israeli military sources told the newspaper that as long as the tension is high along the Syrian border, IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi objects to large-scale action in Gaza because of the difficulty of operating on two fronts without a massive call up of the reserves. The sources said Israel's position might change if a large number of casualties resulted from the Qassam fire.

The media reported that on Wednesday IDF troops discovered 11 Qassam launchers aimed at Israel in the northern Gaza Strip. Leading media reported that concrete cubicles capable of sheltering several people have been placed on the streets of Sderot.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday Israel and the Arab world "jostled" over the content and makeup of the international meeting on the Middle East scheduled for the US later this year, as FM Tzipi Livni strove to deflate expectations and Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa warned against a "useless political

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demonstration."

Ha'aretz reported that Israel recently sent Hamas a new proposal in its negotiations to secure the return of kidnapped IDF Cpl. soldier Gilad Shalit. However, details of the proposal are not known and Hamas has yet to respond. Ha'aretz further quoted a senior Hamas official as saying on Wednesday that European officials recently began mediating between Israel and Hamas over Shalit. He declined to specify which countries, but said that he was not referring to Norway, which recently announced that it was involved in the issue. The Jerusalem Post cited denial by a delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to Israel and the Palestinian territories of an AP report on Wednesday that Shalit's kidnappers "may permit" ICRC representatives to visit him.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that Foreign Ministry officials are currently putting together a basket of decisions with the goal to radicalize the difference in Israel's approach to the Gaza Strip versus the West Bank. The daily quoted a political official in Jerusalem as saying that the fundamental purpose of this policy was the desire to demonstrate to Palestinian society that there is a price to pay for supporting Hamas.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe and Israel Radio reported that on Wednesday Italian President Giorgio Napolitano told President Shimon Peres, who is visiting Italy, that he will strive to obtain signs of life from the IDF soldiers abducted by Hizbullah.

Kadima Knesset Member Otniel Schneller, a former settler leader, was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that he will not prevent PM Olmert from leaving the party. The newspaper reported that he presented Olmert with a diplomatic plan setting strict guidelines for negotiations with the Palestinians.

Ha'aretz quoted GOI sources in Jerusalem as saying that UN cartographer Miklos Pinter is in Israel this week to move ahead on the marking of the controversial boundaries of Sheba Farms. Ha'aretz noted that although PM Olmert and other officials have indicated that Israel may relinquish the Sheba Farms, Israel may not agree in the near future to serious discussion of a pullout from the Farms, due to national consensus, political, and historical/religious reasons.

Ha'aretz reported that the High Court of Justice ruled on Wednesday that even though the East Matityahu neighborhood of the settlement of Modi'in Illit was set up illegally on Palestinian lands, the houses that have already been built need not be dismantled. The court therefore canceled the injunction preventing the houses from

being occupied that it issued in January 2006. Yediot reported that on Wednesday the High Court ruled that Israel will retain some land in the Palestinian village of Bil'in, in whose favor the court had ruled on Tuesday.

Ha'aretz cited a party manifesto drafted by Yisrael Beiteinu Chairman and Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman as saying: "The principle of land for peace is a mistaken and misleading principle that is destined to fail."

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday Shraga Brosh, the President of the Manufacturers Association of Israel, called on Tony Blair to hold an economic regional summit parallel to the upcoming to the US-sponsored meeting on the Middle East.

The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio reported that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is expected to meet with Damascus-based Palestinian factions leaders in Tehran today.

The Jerusalem Post cited a report released today by Human Rights Watch (HRW) that most of the Lebanese civilian casualties during last summer's war came from "indiscriminate Israeli air strikes." The newspaper said that this was HRW's harshest condemnation since the war.

Ha'aretz quoted the family of Omar Masalma, a Palestinian prisoner from the West Bank, as saying that he died in his cell in Ma'asiyahu prison on August 25, due to medical negligence.

Maariv reported that the IDF plans to impose severe sanctions against draft dodgers, such as not allowing them to obtain a driver's license, become MDs or psychologists, or be employed in government offices. Yediot reported that while the number of Orthodox officers in elite IDF units is rising, an increasing number of Orthodox high school students choose to be exempted of military service for religious reasons.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Interior Ministry has prepared a preliminary draft of citizenship criteria that would disqualify some converts to Judaism -- Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform -- from automatically qualifying for citizenship under the Law of Return. The Jerusalem Post reported that young non-Orthodox US Jews are feeling increasingly alienated and disconnected from Israel. The tendency was based on a study released on Thursday by Professors Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman.

Ha'aretz reported that Yehiel Horev, the former head of security at the Defense Ministry, is now working for a private company that sells weapons to India.

Ha'aretz reported that Germany has issued a protest to Israel on the activities of Nativ, a secret branch of the GOI, which is facilitating the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union but are currently in Germany.

Yehuda Avner, Israel's former ambassador to the UK, revealed in an article for The Jerusalem Post today that Diana, Princess of Wales, thought Israel to be a "plucky little country," and that she and her then-husband Prince Charles accepted an invitation to visit "at the appropriate time." Reporting on HRH Prince Edward's private visit to Israel, media noted that British royals made numerous official visits to most Arab countries, but none to Israel.

Maariv reported that FOX-TV is acquiring the rights of the concept of the Channel 2-TV series "Mesudarim" (Settled in Life).

Maariv cited the results of a poll conducted among Israeli Arabs by the Israeli Arab Mada el-Carmel Center:

- "Is it easier today to defeat Israel on the battlefield?" Yes: 49.1 percent; no: 17.2 percent; no change: 28 percent.
- "Has the [Second Lebanon] War harmed Israel's deterrence?" Yes: 52.4 percent; Israel's deterrence is greater: 20 percent; no change: 22.6 percent.

Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "If Olmert wants his political interest to be translated into diplomatic advantage, he has to think carefully about the day after the summit in Washington. He should ask Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak what happens when the beautiful expectations are destroyed."

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Will the world's superpower and the strongest country in the region subordinate an international conference to the whims or madness of a few murderers from Islamic Jihad, who find a plot of land from which they launch Qassam rockets and then flee? Yes."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "There is no proof that making the Palestinian public suffer would cause Hamas to take pity on it and embark on a cease-fire.... What is being presented as a way to avoid war is counterproductive, immoral and illegal."

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Among the reasons cited for not launching an operation is the regional peace conference in November.... Terror, like always, will be the one to decide on a date least amenable to Israel."

Block Quotes:

II. "A Process for its Own Sake"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (9/6): "Olmert's problem is that neither his decision to hold talks with Abbas, nor his agreement to discuss the 'core issues' -- permanent borders, Jerusalem, and the refugees, which he once feared -- is sufficient. Even if he arrives at the Washington summit without any additional terror attacks being perpetrated until then and reaches a reasonable agreement of principles with Abbas, and even if the Saudis come to the meeting with their senior leadership, the path he has chosen leads through dangerous minefields. The first minefield consists of the vague definition of the negotiations' aims.... The second minefield is Abbas's weakness.... The third minefield is the negotiators' total lack of room to maneuver.... If Olmert wants his political interest to be translated into diplomatic advantage, he has to think carefully about the day after the summit in Washington. He should ask Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak what happens when the beautiful expectations are destroyed. A picture with the Saudi prince in a white djellabah would be a nice diplomatic achievement for Olmert, but the results of his policy will be decided in the West Bank and in Gaza, and not on the lawn in Washington."

II. "Do Not Give in to Qassam Rockets"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv (9/6): "Will the world's superpower and the strongest country in the region subordinate an international conference to the whims or madness of a few murderers from Islamic Jihad, who find a plot of land from which they launch Qassam rockets and then flee? Yes. This is the situation, which has been maintained for a long time. For many years we have not evacuated illegal outposts so as not to reward the other side's violence. We are not even considering any kind of meetings -- secret or overt -- with Hamas members over a discussion of a truce ... otherwise they may understand that violence pays, and so on."

III. "Faced with Sderot and Gaza"

Ha'aretz editorialized (9/6): "The distress of Israel's government, which is responsible for defending its citizens, periodically gives rise -- and with greater force than usual this week -- to desperate ideas. One such idea, which is being advocated by Minister Haim Ramon and, more guardedly, by Defense Minister Ehud Barak, is hitting Gaza's water and electricity networks. Stopping the flow of

water and electricity is a painful and punishing step, but ostensibly not a fatal one. Its goal is to cause the Palestinian public to pressure Hamas and Islamic Jihad to stop the fire. This idea is complete nonsense. Factually speaking, cutting off water and electricity can kill. Moreover, there is no proof that making the Palestinian public suffer would cause Hamas to take pity on it and embark on a cease-fire. On the contrary: Hamas consistently sabotages the flow of essential goods through Gaza's border terminals. What is being presented as a way to avoid war is counterproductive, immoral and illegal."

IV. "Buying Time"

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (9/6): "In the wonderful world of euphemisms it is referred to as 'preserving the political echelon's flexibility.' In plain Hebrew it means: to buy a little more time. And if weQd like to be a bit more precise, what the security cabinet decided on Wednesday was to try, as much as possible, to get through the Jewish holidays safe and sound. That is a legitimate decision for a government to make, provided it doesnQt create, in tandem, the false impression that it is actually doing something; provided it doesn't deceive the public and delude it into believing that it is on the way to solving the problem decisively.... Among the reasons cited for not launching an operation is the regional peace conference in November. A military operation is liable to derail the plan.... Everyone is right. The government is right in seeking to buy time. The army is right in saying that it doesnQt want to launch an operation that doesnQt go all the way. The Shin Bet is right when it says that a price needs to be exacted. The residents of Sderot are right when they demand security now. Ehud Barak was also right when he said on Wednesday that in the end there would be no choice but to operate in the Gaza Strip. But all that energy that Israelis invest in being right, logical and balanced is for naught. Because it isn't we who are going to set the timetable for the military crisis in the Gaza Strip. Terror, like always, will be the one to decide on a date least amenable to Israel. The date will be set by the next Qassam rocket and the next terror cell that crosses the fence."

JONES